



Appropriations Committee

Public Hearing on Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)

Tuesday, February 17, 2009

Testimony Submitted by Arka Mikel, MSW Intern at Partnership for Strong Communities and a Resident Services Coordinator at Willimantic Housing Authority

REQUEST:

- **To maintain the \$1 million in the DECD current budget appropriated for the Resident Services Coordinators in housing**

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Arka Mikel and I am a MSW Intern at the Partnership for Strong Communities. I am also a Resident Services Coordinator (RSC) at the Willimantic Housing Authority in Windham County. I am here to ask you to **reinstate the \$50,000.00 for Resident Services Coordinator in Housing and restore \$150,000.00 for elderly counselors.**

Why Funding for the Resident Services Coordinators are important:

- **Providing services to public housing residents through Resident Services Coordinators is cost-effective.**
- **We know that the cost of nursing homes in Connecticut is skyrocketing. According to Connecticut Partnership for Long-Term Care, "the average cost for nursing home is \$299.00 per day and \$109,000.00 per year. The average length of stay in nursing home in Connecticut is 2.5 years, which gives us \$272,000.00 per year."**

Resident Services Coordinators provide critical social and financial services such:

- **Conducting functional and financial assessments for frail elderly and non-elderly disabled adults living in public housing facilities and link their needs to State Department of Social Services Alternate Care Unit for the approval of care services, such as a visiting nurse, Life-line, Home Makers, Home Health Aid, meals on wheels, so on and so forth. This allows the resident to live at their own homes as opposed to living in nursing homes and other more expensive housing alternatives. The Resident Services Coordinators also oversee the quality of services being provided for the low income residents by the services providers to ensure quality and proper delivery of services.**
- **Conducting and mediating conflict resolutions amongst the residents, between the residents and the housing authorities, residents and services providers, and family members and at times friends.**

- Investigating and reporting physical and emotional abuse of the residents.
- Organizing community events design to educate residents and improve the community at Willimantic Housing Authority. **Example:** Invited Connecticut Legal Services for educational workshop on residents' rights and responsibilities at Willimantic Housing Authority. Education on nutritional and other health related programs.
- Helping the residents save money by providing prompt and thorough application reviews of the federal and state entitlement programs such as food stamps, Medicare and Medicaid, and other private supplemental insurances designed to help the elderly and young disabled population.
- Timely meeting the residents needs which translates into longer stay, less conversion and fewer eviction, less maintenance costs for housing authority.
- Investigating and reporting **financial exploitation** of elderly/non-elderly residents by individuals and organizations. **Example:** few years back, I helped an elderly resident with dementia and her family recouped approximately \$6,000.00 from a durable medical equipment company who defrauded the elderly resident by having her signed the contract without clear understanding of the details of the contract. I worked with the local and state law enforcements including the office of the Connecticut Attorney General recouped the money.

Without the Resident Services Coordinators on sites to assess the needs of the residents and linking them to support services, most of the elderly/non-elderly residents will end up in nursing homes or another inappropriate or inadequate housing. This is a bad outcome for the residents and the state.

Please re-instate the \$50,000.00 for Resident Services Coordinators in housing and restore \$150,000.00 for elderly counselors.

Thank you,

Arka Mikel
Resident Services Coordinator